

# **LESSON PLAN/NARRATIVE**

## **Day 4**

### **Module 3: Case Closure**

**Time** 2 hours

**Rationale:** This module will review the case closure process. Participants will learn the steps in the case closure process, including the steps mandated by the Cabinet as well as those dictated by best practice models. This review of case closure will include a discussion of the barriers to case closure, factors that reduce the risk of recidivism and aftercare strategies.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify steps in case closure
2. Describe barriers to case closure and how to address these in practice
3. Identify key factors to prevent recidivism
4. Describe and practice components of an Aftercare Plan

#### **Outline of Activities:**

1. Review questions to assess readiness for case closure (link to ongoing assessment questions)
2. Brainstorm barriers to case closure for both the worker and client
3. Review basic guidelines for case closure
4. Discuss Cabinet steps in case closure process
5. Review factors to reduce recidivism
6. Discuss components of Aftercare Plan
7. Practice writing an Aftercare Plan
8. Develop Implementation Strategies for Day 4 modules
9. Administer worker post-tests for training

#### **Materials:**

1. Smith Family Case Scenario
2. Case Closure Questions handout
3. Correctly completed Aftercare Plan on Smith Family
4. Aftercare Plan Tip Sheet
5. Implementation Strategy Worksheets for Day 4 modules
6. Worker Post-Tests

#### **Glossary of Terms**

- Aftercare Plan
- Recidivism

#### **Trainer's Instructions**

1. Introduce the module by presenting the purpose and objectives.

## 2. Discuss critical steps in case closure according to ASFA:

- *Involve families in case closure decisions.*
- *Assess continuing risks to the child.*
- *Develop a safety plan for reunified families.*
- *Help reunified families acquire help-seeking skills.*
- *Communicate decision to close the case to all relevant agencies and the court, and confirm their ongoing involvement as needed with the child and family.*

## 3. Discuss questions to assess readiness for case closure:

*There are a number of questions that you can ask to assess the readiness of a case for closure. Many of these questions are the same as those asked for the documentation of progress.*

- *How have the parental behaviors negatively impacting on child safety changed?*
- *How have the contributing factors to these behaviors changed?*
- *How have the risk factors changed in a way that impacts the level of risk?*
- *How has the family's ability to meet the children's needs for safety and/or minimum degree of care changed?*
- *How have the conditions for change been modified in ways that impact the family's ability to provide for the safety and basic needs of the children?*
- *How does the parent demonstrate a sense of efficacy and internalization of responsibility in managing daily life with and for the children?*
- *How has the parent demonstrated acceptable caregiving within the context of an increasing level of autonomy?*
- *How have the dynamics that led to abuse or maltreatment changed?*
- *In adoption cases, have the parents been provided assistance in securing pre- and postadoption services designed to support and expedite adoptions?*
- *If child development is a concern, how has the family utilized services outside the Cabinet or its contract agencies to help remediate the lag?*
- *In what ways has the family demonstrated a capacity to manage their involvement with collateral resources outside Cabinet involvement?*

## 3. Discuss barriers to case closure:

*What are some of the issues that are provoked for both you the worker and the family when it comes time to talk about ending the relationship?*

**Allow group to brainstorm issues as you write on flip chart. If the following issues are not identified, add them to the chart after brainstorming ends:**

### ISSUES WITH WORKER

- *Worker is unclear about criteria for closing a case*
- *Worker is using a higher standard of expectation for parental performance and family functioning than can be mandated.*
- *Worker is waiting to feel a comfortable level of certainty that the children will be safe and/or have their basic needs met from now on*

- *Worker perceives the potential for many other changes the family could make to function and feel better*
- *Family has been involved with social services for so long that there is an implicit assumption that they always will be involved with social services*
- *Worker likes the family and has developed an attachment to them*
- *Worker is concerned that if the case is closed, one even more difficult will be assigned*

#### ISSUES WITH FAMILY

- *Family has always had a caseworker and has come to assume they always will*
- *Family's sense of emotional security is vested in the worker or the Cabinet*
- *Parents feel uncertain that they have done what they need to do to ensure the safety and well-being of their children over time*
- *Parent lacks confidence that change can be maintained over time*
- *Parent wants worker to continue in the role of advocate or mediator in their transactions with the school and other community agencies*
- *Family likes the worker and the attention and support that comes with the relationship*

#### **4. Discuss steps to ensure proper case closure:**

*There are things that a worker can do to ensure proper case closure. First, you should start planning for closure early (at the beginning of the agency's work with the family).*

*Then, you must decide when to terminate. We have already talked about some barriers and assessment questions to decide on case closure.*

*The next step is to come to closure. Review the positive aspects of intervention with the child, family and support system. Help all partners deal with residual emotions, especially those related to loss and disappointment. Plan to work with the adoptive family to maximize family connections regardless of the permanency plan if the child has been adopted. And in these cases where the plan does not involve reunification, ensure that the family and caregiver have negotiated and clarified the parents' future role with the child.*

*You should also anticipate the future. This means reaching an agreement with the family about an ongoing post-closure safety plan that is appropriate. This might include services and supports. You should prepare the caregiver for how the child may process issues at different developmental phases. You should also review and rehearse with the family possible future problems and coping/prevention strategies.*

*Other ways that the worker can foster positive case closure is to define the nature of the relationship early in the casework process. Include a planned period of separation prior to final closure. Reassure the client that ending services does not change the worker's feelings for the client. When appropriate, an occasional*

*follow-up phone call or card may let the client know the worker is thinking of the family.*

*Finally, you should also develop an aftercare plan with the family. This includes supports such as extended family, friends, church members and others. These natural sources of support may vary between cultural groups and communities.*

**5. Apply case closure concepts to Smith Family. Ask the following questions.**

- *How would you know that the Smith Family was ready to have their case closed?*
- *How would you know that children would be safe?*
- *Are there issues that would not have to be completely resolved to close this case? What are they?*
- *What aftercare provisions might they need?*

**6. Discuss DCBS steps for case closure:**

*There are also technical steps that you must take to close a case.*

1. *Discuss case closure with client, if appropriate;*
2. *Determine that services are being provided by another vendor that uses DCBS case number (Child Care);*
3. *Complete and forward a CBS 154-A according to procedures; (Standard of Practice)*
4. *Update the DCBS-887 to close the case; and,*
5. *Write a closing summary, including reasons for closure, which shall be signed and dated by the Family Services Worker and Field Service Office Supervisor.*
6. *Develop After Care Plan*

*The closing summary of the case is included in the case record. A brief narrative regarding the case and the reasons for closure are to be entered.*

*The summary may include:*

*Number of months of Services; Agencies still involved in the case;*

*Assessment of family functioning and of support systems that make closure possible; and Reason and date of closure (discussion) The summary shall be signed and dated by the worker. Notification to client of closure with a 154-A shall be documented in the case.*

**7. Brainstorm ASFA requirements for case closure. Distribute the ASFA Case Closure Checklist and confirm/review these requirements.**

**8. Discuss preventing recidivism and developing an Aftercare Plan.**

*One of the deterrents to proper case closure may be the worker's concern that further maltreatment will occur after the case has been closed, and that it will be necessary to re-open the case.*

*The re-opening of a family case by DCBS after it has been served and closed is referred to as recidivism.*

*Many factors can contribute to recidivism. Some of these factors are not within the control of the worker or the agency. However, improper or absent case planning can greatly increase the rate of recidivism.*

*The Worker can reduce the likelihood of recidivism by implementing the following strategies on all cases:*

1. *Proper assessment of the factors that have contributed to the need for Protection.*
2. *The Case Plan should include teaching the client to use supports and resources that "naturally" exist within their environment/ community. (Making it less likely that the withdrawal of case work services will be experienced as stressful or as a loss.)*
3. *After Care Plan:*

*Supports can include linkage with family and extended family; development of friendships; membership in a church and a relationship with a pastor or minister; the development of relationships with staff of community centers; and to access to other community services.*

*The natural sources of support may vary between cultural groups and communities. The worker should identify those sources of support present within the client's own cultural and reference group.*

**9. Have group break into teams and develop an Aftercare Plan for the Smith Family. Use the correctly completed Smith Family Aftercare Plan as a guide to check answers.**

**10. Complete Implementation Worksheets for this day and/or individual modules of training.**